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PAAUZYUW RUEHVIA0834 0791527-UUUU--RHEFLGX.

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

HEADER

P 201527Z MAR 06

FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2798

RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/WHITEHOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY

BT

CONTROLS

UNCLAS VIENNA 000834

DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR LISBETH KEEFE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A

***** THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *****

BODY

TAGS: KPAO, AU, OPRC

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: MARCH 20, 2006

TEN MILLION NEW JOBS

1. INDEPENDENT DAILY "SALZBURGER NACHRICHTEN" REPORTS ON THE UPCOMING EU SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT IN BRUSSELS ON THURSDAY AND FRIDAY. AN INCREASE OF THE NUMBER OF JOBS IN EUROPE BY AT LEAST TWO MILLION UNTIL 2010 IS THE TARGET - IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE IT, THE EU HAS TO STEP UP ITS EFFORTS. MORE MONEY FOR RESEARCH AND A SIMPLIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS FOR SCIENTISTS FROM ABROAD, AS WELL AS PRIVATE FUNDING FOR UNIVERSITIES UNTIL 2007 ARE PLANNED. LIKEWISE, IT WILL BECOME EASIER TO SET UP SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZE ENTERPRISES - LESS BUREAUCRACY AND MORE EU SUBSIDIES. ALSO, THERE WILL BE AN INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE WOMEN AS ENTREPRENEURS AND IN THE WORKFORCE. A NEW ENERGY POLICY IS PLANNED AS WELL - HOWEVER, GERMANY'S CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL HAS ALREADY PROTESTED AGAINST MORE EU INTERFERENCE INTO THE ENERGY POLICY OF INDIVIDUAL STATES, WRITES THE DAILY.

AUSTRIAN ARMY NEEDS MORE DOCTORS

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2. INDEPENDENT DAILY "DER STANDARD" REPORTS ON THE LACK OF QUALIFIED MILITARY DOCTORS THAT THE AUSTRIAN ARMY WOULD NEED TO FULFILL ITS NEW INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS PROVIDED FOR IN THE ARMY REFORM. CURRENTLY, THERE ARE ONLY 60 DOCTORS, VETERINARIANS AND PHARMACOLOGISTS WORKING FOR THE ARMY - 230 TO 250 WOULD BE NEEDED TO MEET THE STANDARDS THAT AUSTRIA HAS SET FOR ITSELF IN THE EU. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DAILY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE AUSTRIAN SOCIETY FOR MILITARY MEDICINE AND MILITARY PHARMACOLOGY, MANFRED STRICKNER, PREDICTS THAT UNTIL 2012 OR 2015, THERE WILL BE NO ADEQUATE MEDICAL CARE FOR THE POLITICALLY DESIRABLE FOREIGN MISSIONS. THE PROBLEM IS THAT POSSIBLE INJURIES CONTRACTED DURING MILITARY CONFLICT ARE WIDELY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE THAT HAPPEN IN EVERYDAY CIVILIAN LIFE AND THEREFORE, SPECIALIZED MEDICAL TRAINING IS NECESSARY, WRITES "DER STANDARD."

AUSTRIA REACHED THIRD PLACE IN EU-RANKING

3. ... HEADLINES MASS CIRCULATION DAILY "KURIER", REFERRING TO A REPORT BY THE LONDON CENTER FOR EUROPEAN REFORM AND TO BE INTRODUCED ON MONDAY BY EU COMMISSION PRESIDENT JOSE MANUEL BARROSO. THE STUDY ANALYZES THE INCREASE IN COMPETITIVENESS IN A NUMBER OF AREAS, AND AUSTRIA WAS PARTICULARLY SUCCESSFUL IN THE AREAS OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT, ENERGY EFFICIENCY, AND NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES, WHEREAS IT HAD DEFICIENCIES WITH REGARD TO REDUCTION OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND EMPLOYMENT OF OLDER JOBHOLDERS. ONLY DENMARK AND SWEDEN GOT HIGHER MARKS THAN AUSTRIA, WRITES THE DAILY. POLAND, PORTUGAL, SPAIN, ITALY AND MALTA OCCUPIED THE BOTTOM RANKS. THE SITUATION IN POLAND IS SAID TO BE ESPECIALLY BLEAK: AN EMPLOYMENT RATE OF ONLY 52 PERCENT, REDUCED FOREIGN INVESTMENTS, AND A POLITICAL CONSTELLATION THAT LEAVES LITTLE HOPE FOR A SPEEDY IMPROVEMENT, REPORTS "KURIER."

FISCHER IN SAUDI ARABIA

4. CENTRIST DAILY "DIE PRESSE" REPORTS ON THE STATE VISIT OF AUSTRIAN FEDERAL PRESIDENT HEINZ FISCHER TO SAUDI ARABIA. THE PRESIDENT WAS RECEIVED WITH AMPLE GESTURES AND SYMBOLS OF HOSPITALITY THE ACCOMPANYING INDUSTRY DELEGATION IS

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PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN THE CONTINUATION OF THE GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES THAT PRESIDENT FISCHER EMPHASIZED THROUGH THE INVITATION HE EXTENDED TO KING ABDULLAH BIN ABDULAZIZ TO COME TO VIENNA NEXT YEAR ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF BILATERAL RELATIONS. IN A STATEMENT BEFORE THE AUSTRIAN PRESS, SAUDI ARABIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE SAUD AL-FEISAL SPOKE ON THE NEW ROLE OF HAMAS AND URGED THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO GIVE HAMAS TIME TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION. HE ALSO ARGUED FOR A CONTINUATION OF ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN AUTONOMY AUTHORITIES. HE ALSO PROPOSED A NUCLEAR-FREE ZONE IN THE GULF REGION TO INCREASE SECURITY, BUT ADDED THAT "FOR THAT WE WOULD NEED SUPPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND THAT WOULD HAVE TO GET ISRAEL TO RENOUNCE ITS NUCLEAR WEAPONS." PRINCE SAUD AL-

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FEISAL IS ONE OF THE SHARPEST CRITICS OF THE IRAQI CONSTITUTIONAL DRAFT, "DIE PRESSE" POINTS OUT.

SO-CALLED SLAVE AGREEMENT DIVIDES FRANCE

5. ALL AUSTRIAN MEDIA REPORT ON THE CONTINUED UNREST IN FRANCE, WHERE ABOUT 1.5 MILLION PEOPLE TOOK PART IN DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE NEW EMPLOYMENT LAW, WHICH ITS OPPONENTS DENOUNCE AS A "SLAVE AGREEMENT," WRITES CENTRIST DAILY "DIE PRESSE." TRADE UNIONS AND STUDENTS HAVE NOW SET AN ULTIMATUM FOR THE GOVERNMENT - IF IT DOES NOT TAKE BACK ITS REFORM DRAFT, THERE WILL BE A COUNTRYWIDE, GENERAL STRIKE. ACCORDING TO ORF RADIO MORNING NEWS, THE GOVERNMENT UNDER PRIME MINISTER DOMINIQUE DE VILLEPIN HAS ALREADY REJECTED THE ULTIMATUM, SAYING A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM WILL HAVE TO BE NEGOTIATED, AND THAT THE REFORM PLANS WILL NOT SIMPLY BE CANCELLED. THE TRADE UNIONS AND STUDENTS HAVE WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FROM THE FRENCH POPULATION - THREE FOURTHS OPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT'S EMPLOYMENT LAW REFORM, WHICH INCLUDES A CLAUSE PROVIDING FOR A TWO-YEAR PERIOD DURING WHICH EMPLOYERS HAVE THE RIGHT TO FIRE RECENTLY-HIRED YOUNG

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EMPLOYEES UNDER THE AGE OF 26 ANY TIME WITHOUT GIVING REASONS, WRITES "DIE PRESSE." THE GOVERNMENT SEES THIS INITIATIVE AS A WAY TO ENCOURAGE EMPLOYERS TO HIRE MORE YOUNG PEOPLE - THE OPPONENTS OF THE REFORM PLAN FEAR THAT IT IS A STEP TOWARDS DISMANTLING THE SOCIAL SYSTEM.

NEW TORTURE SCANDAL IN US ARMY

6. ORF ONLINE REPORTS ON THE NEW TORTURE CHARGES THAT THE "NEW YORK TIMES" HAS LEVELED AGAINST US SOLDIERS IN IRAQ. THE LATEST CHARGES REFER TO A **SECRET PRISON** AT BAGHDAD AIRPORT WHERE PRISONERS WERE BEATEN AND SPAT ON BY US SOLDIERS, WHO ALSO USED THEM AS LIVE PAINTBALL TARGETS, THE "NYT" WROTE ON SUNDAY, CITING PENTAGON DOCUMENTS AND INTERVIEWS WITH OFFICIALS. ACCORDING TO THE DAILY, THE LATEST REVELATIONS DISPROVE GOVERNMENT CLAIMS THAT THE ABUSE CASES IN ABU GHRAIB WERE THE DEEDS OF A FEW INDIVIDUALS. THE US ELITE UNIT "TASK FORCE 26" HAD TAKEN OVER A TORTURE PRISON USED BY SADDAM HUSSEIN, WHICH HAD 85 CELLS AND A SO-CALLED DARK ROOM. THE CIA KNEW ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF THE PRISON BEFORE ABU GHRAIB BECAME AN ISSUE - THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE HAD REPORTED BACK TO WASHINGTON THAT THE INTERROGATION METHODS OF THE US MILITARY IN THE PRISON WERE TOO AGGRESSIVE. THE CAMP WAS CLOSED IN SUMMER 2004, WRITES ORF ONLINE.

LUKASCHENKO DECLARED WINNER OF ELECTIONS IN BELARUS

7. ORF ONLINE REPORTS ON THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS IN BELARUS, WHERE PRESIDENT ALEXANDER LUKASCHENKO WAS DECLARED THE OFFICIAL WINNER OF THE ELECTIONS WITH 82.6 PERCENT OF THE VOTES. LEADING OPPOSITION CANDIDATE ALEXANDER MILINKEVICH GOT ONLY 6 PERCENT, ACCORDING TO THE ELECTION COMMISSION. SUNDAY NIGHT, ABOUT 15,000 PEOPLE DEMONSTRATED AGAINST THE ELECTIONS PROCEDURE AND LEVELED CHARGES OF FRAUD AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. THE OSCE HAS ANNOUNCED A STATEMENT WITH REGARD TO THE PROCEDURE AND OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION FOR MONDAY. EVEN BEFORE THE ELECTION TOOK PLACE, US AMBASSADOR TO THE OSCE JULIE FINLEY, IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE AUSTRIAN PRESS AGENCY (APA), HAD ANNOUNCED THAT THE US REACTION DEPENDED ON THE EXTENT OF ELECTION FRAUD - "ANY SUPPRESSION OF PEACEFUL PROTESTS WILL HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES," SAID

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FINLEY. ELECTION MANIPULATION HAD ALREADY TAKEN PLACE BEFORE THE ACTUAL ELECTIONS, THE US AMBASSADOR SAID, AND ELECTION MATERIAL HAD BEEN REMOVED, THE RIGHT FOR FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY HAD BEEN IMPAIRED AND OPPOSITION POLITICIANS HAD BEEN ARRESTED.

HAMAS PRESENTS CABINET LIST TO ABBAS

8. ALL AUSTRIAN MEDIA GIVE COVERAGE TO THE PRESENTATION OF THE CABINET LIST BY HAMAS' PRIME MINISTER DESIGNATE ISMAIL HANIYEH TO PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT MAHMUD ABBAS ON SUNDAY. ACCORDING TO ORF ONLINE, NO NAMES HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED AS YET, HOWEVER, IT WAS SAID THAT CENTRAL POSITIONS WILL BE TAKEN BY HAMAS MEMBERS. SINCE HAMAS' HOPES TO ACHIEVE A

***** START OF SECTION 3 *****

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COALITION WITH THE FATAH HAVE COME TO NOTHING THERE WILL BE MANY "TECHNOCRATS" AND PROFESSORS AMONG THE MINISTERS ON THE CABINET LIST, WRITES INDEPENDENT DAILY "DER STANDARD."

CENTRIST DAILY "DIE PRESSE" SEES THE PRESENTATION OF THE CABINET LIST AS THE FIRST BIG DEFEAT FOR HAMAS - IT REFLECTS THE FAILURE TO COME TO AN AGREEMENT WITH FATAH AND OTHER MODERATE GROUPS ABOUT A COALITION GOVERNMENT.

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